

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SINGAP 00707 150911Z

12

ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 NEA-11 ISO-00 AF-10 IO-14 CIAE-00

DODE-00 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01

DRC-01 /127 W

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P R 150745Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0087

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 0707

JAKARTA OR CANBERRA FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY INGERSOLL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, QG, UK, IO, IR

SUBJ: NOTIFICATION OF DIEGO GARCIA EXPANSION

REF: A) SINGAPORE 0550 B) STATE 026530

1. SUMMARY: SUBJECT OF DIEGO GARCIA CAME UP IN ASST SECRETARY INGERSOLL'S CALLS ON PM LEE AND FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM FEBRUARY 14. IN BOTH CASES, GOS SUPPORT WAS EXPRESSED FOR OUR NAVAL PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN AND FOR OUR PLANS TO EXPAND FACILITIES AT DEIGO GARCIA. IN THE CASE OF THE PM, THIS SUPPORT WAS EXPRESSED RATHER EMPHATICALLY. END SUMMARY.

2. PM LEE ASKED ASSISTANT SECRETARY INGERSOLL WHETHER WE INTENDED TO MAKE A MORE VISIBLE EFFORT TO COUNTER RUSSIAN PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WHICH, HE SAID, IS LIKELY TO
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PAGE 02 SINGAP 00707 150911Z

INCREASE WITH THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL. INGERSOLL

REFERRED TO OUR PLANNED EXPANSION OF DIEGO GARCIA AND OUR PLANS TO MAINTAIN A SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. LATER IN CONVERSATION, AFTER INGERSOLL HAD REVIEWED SITUATION IN INDO-CHINA AND THAILAND, PM ASKED: " AND FURTHER SOUTH, CAN THE US MAINTAIN A BALANCE AGAINST THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE?" INGERSOLL SAID IT WAS OUR POLICY TO DO SO AND AGAIN REFERRED TO DIEGO GARCIA. INGERSOLL SAID HE BELIVED THE ARABS AND IRAN WELCOMED OUR PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN TO WHICH THE PM RESPONDED EMPHATICALLY, "ABSOLUTELY". HE SAID THERE IS ONLY ONE COUNTRY WHICH DOESN'T REALLY WANT US THERE, AND THAT IS THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF. EVEN THE INDIAN, WHO MAKE NOISES ABOUT US PRESENCE, DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE INDIAN OCIEAN TO THE RUSSIANS. HE SAID IT WOULD BE A TERRIBLE SITUATION IF, AMONG THE MAJOR POWERS, ONLY THE RUSSIANS HAD NAVAL UNITS THERE.

3. RAJARATNAM SAID THAT IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH IRANIAN AND PAKISTANI LEADERS HE HAD POINTED OUT THAT THE INDIAN OCEAN WOULD BECOME INCREASINGLY AN AREA OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ATTENTION AND CONCERN. HE SAID GOS DIFFERED WITH CEYLON AND INDIA ABOUT THE WISDOM OF PROMOTING THEIR PLAN TO MAKE THE INDIAN OCEAN A ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY. "IT'S AN ATTRACTIVE CONCEPT, IN PRINCIPLE, BUT TOTALLY UNREALISTIC IN THE REAL WORLD." HE HAD ARGUED THAT IF THE ZONE CONCEPT WERE ACCEPTED, THERE IS DANGER THAT THE DEMOCRACIES, ACTING UNDER PUBLIC PRESSURE, WOULD PULL OUT. HOWEVER, THE RUSSIANS, WHO ARE NOT SUBJECT TO SUCH PRESSURE, WOULD NOT. SINGAPORE WANTED ALL THE NAVIES TO BE THERE, INCLUDING NAVIES FROM THE LARGER LITTORAL STATES INTHE REGION, TO COUNTER-BALANCE EACH OTHER. HE SAID BOTH PAKISTANIS AND IRANIANS APPEARED TO BE INTERESTED IN THIS VIEW. FONMIN HAD DISCUSSED WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS POSSIBILITY OF SENDING SOME OF THEIR NAVAL VESSELS ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN FOR A VISIT TO SINGAPORE. THEY APPEARED INTERESTED.

4. RAJARATNAM INDICATED AGREEMENT WITH INGERSOLL'S OBSERVATION THAT OUR PLANS TO EXPAND FACILITIES AT DIEGO GARCIA WERE CONSISTENT WITH SINGAPORE VIEW.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SINGAP 00707 150911Z

(COMMENT: RAJARARTNAM'S VIEWS AS REPORTED ABOVE

GIVE A CLEARER AND MORE ACCURATE VIEW OF GOS OUTLOOK ON INDIAN OCEAN THAN PRESS ACCOUNT REPORTED TO TEHRAN'S 1097.)

5. COMMENT: THIS POSITIVE REACTIONTO OUR EXPANSION PLANS AT DIEGO GARCIA CAME AS NO SURPRISE. WE WERE A LITTLE CONCERNED IN READING TEHRAN'S 1097 THAT THE FOREIGN

MINISTER WAS WAFFLING A BIT ON THE ISSUE, BUT IT IS
CLEAR FROM THE ABOVE THAT GOS SUPPORT FOR OUR PRESENCE IN
THIS REGION AND IN THE INDIAN OCEAN IS AS STRONG AS EVER.
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